

Belview
Belview
NEAR Tippet, Md.

Prince George

MD-654

HABS No.
HABS
MD
17-TIP.V

2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Washington, D.C.

Historic American Buildings Survey
Delos H. Smith, District Officer
1707 Eye St., N.W., Washington, D.C.

BELLEVIEW
(Belle Vue) (Lowe-Steed House)
3301 Steed Road
Fort Washington
Prince George's County
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-654

HABS
MD
17-TIRV,
2-

Addendum To:
BELLEVIEW
(Belle Vue Farm) (Lowe-Steed House)
3201 Steed Road
Piscataway Vic.
Prince George's County
Maryland

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HABS
MD
17-TIRV,
2-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BELLEVIEW (Lowe-Steed House)

HABS NO. MD-654

An addendum to
Bellevue (Lowe-Steed House)
3201 Steed Road
Piscataway vicinity

Location: 3301 Steed Road, Fort Washington, Prince George's County, Maryland, 20744

Present Owner: R.S. Bayne Robertson, 3201 Steed Road

Present Use: The house has been vacant since the early 1960s. It is in fair but semi-dilapidated state. However, the owner is maintaining it against further deterioration.

Significance: Bellevue an excellent example of a small, early plantation house, represents what must have been a common early-settlement house type, which rarely survives today. Early dwellings such as this were later supplanted by a second generation of substantial manor houses financed by the tobacco prosperity of the late-18th and early-19th centuries. Bellevue began as a modest ca. 1792 hall-and-parlor-plan house and evolved into a somewhat more sophisticated residence with a number of additions, including the flounder section to the side and the Greek Revival interior detail added ca. 1830. The farmstead has an interesting collection of outbuildings, including a log meathouse and one of the oldest tobacco barns in the county. The farmstead has been in the Lowe-Steed family since it was first settled.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The original hall-and-parlor house was built ca. 1792 as evidenced by the numbers, "17(9?)2", carved into the brick at the top of the chimney. Ca. 1830 (between 1820-40) the house was doubled in size and period trim added.

2. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1786 Will, probated August 8, 1786, T#1:238.
Enoch Magruder
To
Ann Magruder Lowe, daughter
All that part of Stony Harbor where Benjamin Duvall lived, & all land I bought of Thomas Lanham adjacent to Stony Harbor.
- 1797 Will (unrecorded), 1797 in Chancery #3100
Barbara & Elizabeth Lowe testify that their mother (Ann Magruder Lowe) made a will in 1797, never legally witnessed, but their father Michael Lowe consented to it. Ann Lowe died possessed of a farm of 435 acres (left to her by her father's will) on Tinker's Branch, made up of Stony Harbor, 2 Johns and Lanham's Delight; she devises it to her son, Lloyd M. Lowe.
- 1851 Will, (codicil July 18, 1849), probated May 27, 1851, PC#1:457
Lloyd M. Lowe
Leaves Belleview farm to be operated by son John F.M. Lowe for 7 years after death of testator, then son John H. Lowe shall take over farm and hold in trust for his son, Lloyd M. Lowe (the III).
- 1856 Deed, May 13, 1856, CSM#1:220
Lloyd M. Lowe III
To
James M. Steed (husband of Leonora Lowe)
Farm, Belleview which grantor obtained by will of his grandfather, Lloyd M. Lowe.
- Also, Deed, May 13, 1856, CSM#1:332
John H. Lowe (trustee)
To
James M. Steed
- 1884 Deed, October 8, 1884, JWB#3:753
James M. Steed
To
John J.R. Steed, son
Belleview, 400 acres more or less, same land that grantor obtained from Lloyd M. Lowe and trustee, John H. Lowe by CSM#3:220 & 332.
- 1923 Will, probated, April 10, 1923, GPH#2:578

John J.R. Steed
To
Mary Steed, wife; then to children

- 1924 Deed of partition, May 8, 1924, 217:286
Heirs of John J.R. Steed
To
Harriet L. Bayne, Lowe E. Steed, Robert E. Steed, Mary P. Steed and M. Helen Steed, as joint tenants.
- 1983 Deed 5720:936, 12 July 1983
Robert Stanley Bayne Robertson, personal representative of the estate of Mary Pamela Steed
To
Robert S.B. Robertson

4. Original plans and construction: Although there are no original plans, evidence suggests that the original house was a heavy timber-framed, simple hall and parlor, probably with a boxed stair to a loft area above.

5. Alterations and additions: As evidenced by ghosts of the previous roof line seen on the interior side of the chimney stacks, the roof was extended to accommodate two rooms and a stairhall to the rear and a full, dormered second story. To create a larger southwest (dining) room, a flounder section was added. There is also a late 19th-century kitchen addition to the south.

B. Historical Context:

The property "Stoney Harbor" was left by Enoch Magruder to his married daughter, Ann Lowe, in 1786, according to the provisions of his will. It is assumed that Enoch Magruder possibly farmed, but never lived here. It is known that he lived at the fine detailed Georgian residence "Harmony Hall," and owned other property in the county as well. The description of the property given in the will states, "all that parcel of a Tract of Land called Stoney Harbor where Benjamin Duvall lived on..." (Prince Georges County, Wills, T. liber no. 1, folio 238. Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis), suggesting that there was a tenant house here by the time of Enoch Magruder's death in 1786. This, however, conflicts with 1792 date on the chimney. Perhaps a new dwelling was built or an addition made.

It appears that the original house was a two-room hall-and-parlor type dwelling with a loft above, and that the rear section is an addition, suggested by the fact that the foundation for this section is different from that of the rear section and front section alone has a cellar. Also, notching on the chimney block suggest that the roof was lowered in pitch, to accommodate a rear section. Finally, the interior trim dates from the early 19th century (Ca. 1820-40).

Based on extensive research, Diane Wasch concluded that most likely neither Enoch Magruder nor Ann Lowe lived here, and that Belleview was instead a tenant house during their lifetimes. Though of substantial construction, the original house was not the home of persons of their means. Furthermore, Ann Lowe's will bequeathing the property to her son, Lloyd M. Lowe, suggests that she lived elsewhere, "all the land that I had by will from my Father on the Tinker's Branch to him (Lloyd M. Lowe) and his wife during their lives..." and then "... I give and bequeath all my Forest Land that I now hold by Dead (sic) where I now live to be divided between my two sons, Henry H. Lowe and James R.M. Lowe...." (Prince Georges County, Wills, T. Liber no. 1, folio 412. Maryland Hall of Records, Annapolis). However, Lloyd M. Lowe is reported as working and living in Annapolis in 1800-1801 (Maryland Gazette, March 13, 1800 and April 16, 1801).

As Wasch concludes, substantial increases in acreage to the original parcel, as evidenced by the tax assessment records, between 1806-1826 suggests that Lloyd Lowe came here to live (and farm). Thus, no longer a tenant house but a family house, it would make sense that Lowe would have made additions and improvements to the property at this time. Furthermore, Belleview's late 18th-century hall-and-parlor core is consistent with building in the Tidewater area of that time period. It fits the pattern of the more modest but typical house of "Virginia" tradition. In addition, the 1798 direct tax indicates that frame dwellings, less than two stories and of the relative dimensions of Belleview were typical, although few survive.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Belleview is a vernacular, early-settlement type of dwelling, in the tradition of

the southern tidewater region. Once a common early house type, it is rarely seen in the county today. Belleview has undergone changes throughout the years, showing the evolution of a simple dwelling that comes with prosperity, and changes in building styles and methods of construction. It grew from a simple one-room deep, hall-and-parlor plan with a loft above, into a double-pile dwelling with stairhall and (dormered) half-story. Later, during the late nineteenth century, a kitchen with loft was added.

2. Condition of fabric: Belleview is currently in fair to poor condition, having been abandoned and maintained only against further deterioration.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Belleview has a one-and-one-half story, three-bay wide main block with a gable roof with dormers. It measures approximately 26' (35' to the rear with the flounder addition) x 31'. To the southern end is a one-story (with loft), single-cell kitchen addition measuring 13' x 13' 9".

2. Foundations: The foundation of the original section is of brick construction with some "bog iron" stone intermixed. The rear, west section of the main block is of brick cemented over. The foundations of the chimneys are of bog iron stone. The kitchen wing rests on brick piers.

3. Walls: The walls are of clapboard siding with corner boards, currently unpainted. The dormers are covered with wood shingles.

4. Structural system, framing: The main block of the house has a wood frame, presumably of heavy timber frame with hewn joints (based on the period of construction). The floor joists, as seen from the shallow cellar (under the old section only), are of unhewn logs. The late nineteenth-century kitchen wing is presumably of balloon-frame construction.

5. Porches: A shed-roofed porch, which kicks up slightly from the roof of the house, runs along the facade of the main block (26' x 6'). The porch is supported by four plain squared posts, slightly tapering, with beveled footings; and a plain, squared balustrade. The porch rests on log piers. There is another, small porch located in the crux of the main block and the flounder addition at the front elevation, entered by a door into

the dinning room (6'-7" x 8'-9"). There is a third porch at the south (side) elevation of the kitchen wing (14'-6" x 7'-2").

6. Chimneys: Belleview has four chimneys. There is an exterior end chimney to the east front of the north side of the main block. It has a stone foundation and is of brick with glazed headers and has weatherings at the loft level. High on the south side of the stack, carved into one of the bricks is the date "17(9?)2". Balancing this chimney on the south side is a chimney of the same design though it is larger (serving two fireplaces instead of only one) and has no glazing, and appears to have been partially rebuilt. It is of interest because it gives a clue as to the expansion of the house. It has a V-shaped ledge, probably on which the original, higher-pitched roof would have rested. It also has "queen closers," short headers used to fill smaller spaces. The second chimney on the south side, to the rear of the house, is brick with weatherings at the first story (it serves a first-story fireplace only) and has a foundation, probably of brick, cemented over. The fourth chimney, located within the kitchen wing, is a huge block which serves the dining room and large kitchen fireplace.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entry is slightly off from the center of the facade and has a six panel door with a three-light transom above. There is also a doorway to the rear of the main block, under the stairway, in the dining room at the east wall (southeast corner) and a doorway into the kitchen from the south side. The doors are six-panel wooden doors.

b. Windows: The windows in the first story of the original section of the main block are nine-over-six-light sash (now boarded up), some still with louvered shutters. The windows in the rear section are six-over-six-light sash as are the windows in the dormers.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block has a side-gabled roof covered with wood shingles, now covered with asphalt shingles with sheet asphalt over it. The flounder section has a shed roof, an extension of the main house. The kitchen also has a side-gabled roof. The porches are all shed-roofed.

b. cornice, eaves: The cornice and eave area of Belleview is completely unornamented. A plain narrow board runs along the gable ends at the side elevations.

c. Dormers: Belleview has four dormers on the roof, two at the front of the main block and two at the rear, and one large wall dormer at the rear. The four regular dormers have gable roofs, shingled at the sides, with six-over-six-light sash windows. To the center of the rear elevation is a large wall dormer which lights the stairway.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: The front doorway enters into the hall (15'-6" x 15'-3") of the original hall and parlor structure. There is a fireplace to the center of the north side wall. Adjoining the hall, to the south, is the parlor (15'-6" x 9'-9"), with a fireplace to the center of the south side wall. To the rear of the hall, straight back from the main entry, is the doorway into the stairhall. The stair is located against the south wall. There is a rear entry (directly across from the front entry) at the far end of the stairhall, and a closet under the stair. To the center of the north wall of the stairhall is an entry into the back room (15'-6" x 10'-6"), with a fireplace to the center of the north side wall. At the foot of the stairs is an entry into the dining room (15'-6" x 16'-6"), again with a fireplace to the center of the south wall. At the southwest corner of the dining room is an entry onto a small porch. At the southeast corner along the south wall is the doorway into the kitchen wing (13'-6" x 13'-9"). Along the west side wall of the huge chimney block around which the L-shaped kitchen is built is an attached ladder up to a loft over the kitchen. The kitchen has a large cooking fireplace, now boarded over with a flue pipe for the stove. At the south end wall of the kitchen is the doorway onto the side porch.

b. Second floor: The stairway leads up to a second floor stairhall. The rooms follow the basic floor plan of the first floor with a room over each of the downstairs rooms. The only difference is that a

hall was created between the hall chamber and the parlor chamber, with a closet at the end over the entry.

2. Stairway: The stairway is an open-well, two-flight, stair with a dormer at the landing providing light. The newel and balustrade along the first run were taken out by vandals but are being stored in an upstairs room. A portion of the balustrade remains on the second floor. It has a simple turned post with plain rectangular balusters. The spandrel wall has tall narrow panels.

3. Flooring: Bellevue has wood flooring throughout although it is in poor condition and patched in areas.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The interior walls are all lath and plaster. The plaster is in poor condition and is falling off in some areas, especially in the second story. The original hall and the dining room, being the two formal rooms, both have a simple chair rail and beaded baseboards. The walls in the kitchen are covered with beaded wainscoting.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The door surrounds in the first story have an inner bead with a cavetto backband, with six-panel doors. The trim in the second story is similar but plainer with a narrow, deep cavetto backband. The trim in the kitchen is a wide band with an inner bead, and an ogee backband.

b. Windows: The window surrounds match those of the doorways. The dormered window lighting the stairhall has Victorian multi-band molding, suggesting that the dormer was a later addition.

6. Decorative features and trim: The interior trim is from the second period of construction (1820-40), as evidenced by its Greek Revival styling. In the hall is a finely detailed mantel flanked with fluted, tapering colonettes with molded capitals and a panelled frieze with a Greek profile with a bracketed shelf above. The mantels in the parlor and dining room are simpler. The parlor mantel has a molded surround, a plain frieze and a shelf with a Greek profile. The dining-room mantel has panelled pilasters and frieze with a profiled shelf. The mantel in the hall chamber on the second floor is plain but has an ornamental cast-iron fireplace insert.

BELLEVIEW (Lowe-Steed House)
HABS NO. MD-654 (page 9)

7. Hardware: The door into the northwest bedroom from the hall has a suffolk latch operated by a door knob.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: There is no central heating system. The house was presumably heated with fireplace and wood- or coal-burning inserts. There is also an old "Home Comfort" stove in the kitchen.

b. Electric: The house has minimal electric wiring.

c. Plumbing: The house is without indoor plumbing with the exception of a cold-water sink in the kitchen. There are no indoor bathrooms.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house sits on a rise, facing southeast on to a gradually sloping field to the east, with planted fields to the north and west. There is a family cemetery to the northeast. The numerous outbuildings are to the south and west of the house.

2. Historic landscape design: There is little evidence of a designed landscape, although there are a number of old trees and boxwoods, and daffodils appear to grow wild. There is a family cemetery northeast of the house with Steed and Edelin family tombstones in it.

3. Outbuildings: There are a number of outbuildings on the property. The 18th-century buildings remaining include the tobacco barn, meat house and corn crib. The meat house is located just southwest of the kitchen wing, and is of log construction with a batten door. To the west of this are a chicken house and timber-frame corn crib with attached fish house (according to the current owner, but more recently used as a garage). To the south is a barn with a "slave quarter" or storage shed and a garage to the west of it. Farther west is a small pump house. Across a field to the west is the tobacco barn, one of the oldest standing in the county.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views: There is one photograph taken of Belleview by the Historic American Buildings Survey in April of 1936. The photographer was John O. Brostrup. It is a perspective

view of the southeast front, taken from the south to include the kitchen wing.

B. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Pearl, Susan G. Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form, prepared June 1988.

Prince George's County Land Records, Courthouse, Upper Marlboro (as cited in text).

Prince George's County Register of Wills, Courthouse, Upper Marlboro (as cited in text).

Wasch, Diane S. "Bellevue: From Tenant Dwelling to Lowe Family Homestead." December 1987.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Herman, Bernard L. Architecture and Rural Life in Central Delaware. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987.

Forman, Henry Chandlee. Tidewater Maryland Architecture and Gardens. New York: Bonanza Books, 1956.

Prepared by: Catherine C. Lavoie
Historian
November 1989

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of Bellevue was undertaken as part of a cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission on behalf of the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to document select sites throughout the county. A memorandum of Agreement was signed in August of 1988 and the project, to span one year, began in January of 1989. Gail Rothrock, director, and Susan G. Pearl, research historian, (HPC) made the selection of sites. They also provided access to their historical research and information on file with the HPC, as well as their extensive knowledge of Prince George's County history. The large format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer Jack E. Boucher. The historical report was prepared by Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS historian, who also accompanied the photographer into the field for on-site investigations.

ADDENDUM TO:
BELLEVIEW
(Belle Vue)
(Lowe-Steed House)
3201 Steed Road
Fort Washington
Prince George's
Maryland

HABS MD-654
MD, 17-TIP.V, 2-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001